



Hints and Tips - Colour Guide - Spartans

By Mick Farnworth

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Part 1 - Spartan Hoplites



Gorgon figures painted by Mick Farnworth

| Item | Colour | Vallejo Model Colour |
|----------------------|--------|--|
| Helmet Crest | Black | Black 70.950 |
| Helmet Crest | Red | Flat Red 70.957 |
| Helmet Crest | White | White 70.951 |
| Helmet | Bronze | See notes in painting section |
| Shield | Bronze | See notes in painting section |
| Shield Lining | Brown | Mahogany Brown 70.846, Flat Brown 70.984 |
| Linothorax (armour) | White | White 70.951 |
| Linothorax sides | Brown | Mahogany Brown 70.846, Flat Brown 70.984 |
| Greaves (leg armour) | Bronze | See notes in painting section |
| Spear Point | Silver | Natural Steel 70.863 |
| Spear Shaft | Brown | Mahogany Brown 70.846, Flat Brown 70.984 |
| Spear butt Spike | Bronze | See notes in painting section |
| Tunic | Red | Flat Red 70.957 |
| Leather Belt | Brown | Mahogany Brown 70.846, Flat Brown 70.984 |
| Scabbard (Leather) | Brown | Mahogany Brown 70.846, Flat Brown 70.984 |



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Notes

Armour

Gorgon figures are depicted in Linothorax which is a flexible chest armour made of many layers of linen. During the period of Thermopylae, the Linothorax was more popular than solid bronze breastplates (cuirass). Linothorax were mainly white but often decorated with coloured leather edgings.

Shields

Spartans are traditionally depicted with bronze shields bearing a lambda. This is not really accurate as modern research shows that the lambda device was reserved for new citizens. Spartan armies were formed into mora (regiments) supplied from the cities of Sparta. Their respective regimental emblems are shown in this illustration by Nikos Panos and George Heliopoulos.



Copyrighted image courtesy of Nikos Panos & George Heliopoulos and available as a poster from <http://www.300spartanwarriors.com/battleofthermopylaeart/spartanmilitaryart.html>

Painting Spears

It is often easier to differentiate between spears and javelins if the spears are dark and javelins are light coloured. This simulates that javelins would be new freshly cut wood, whereas spears were kept for a long time and often stained dark brown.

Bases

It is worth deciding on the rules that you are going to use before you start to base and paint the figures. Mass battle games often specify multiple bases to represent regiments.

For Fields of Glory, in 28mm scale you should mount four figures on a 60mm x 20mm base although it is acceptable to base 3 figures on a 60mm x 20mm base.

For Warhammer Ancients Battles, Legionnaires go on 20mm x 20mm squares.

For skirmish games, most rules suggest individual bases. Some rules suggest 25mm diameter bases and some suggest 20mm diameter bases.

Plastic bases (e.g. Slottabases), wooden bases, washers or coins are all suitable. 20mm steel washers can be used with magnetic bases so that the figures can be adapted to many different sets of rules.

Metal Spears



Metal spears can be obtained from North Star or you can make them yourself. North Star makes 4 types of metal spears. These are available in packs of approximately 80 and can be found on the Gorgon website under Modelling Materials. NSS102 is the best choice for Spartan Hoplites.

- NSS101 are thin wire javelins, 40mm long with the ends flattened and shaped into spearheads. They are also suitable for 15mm figure ranges
- NSS102 are 100mm long wire spears, with one end flattened and shaped into a spear point. These can be used as a pike or cut down for spears and javelins. You can also use them for flag poles.
- NSS103 - Wire Lances or Pikes. This wire spear is 100mm long with one end fashioned to a point rather than a spearhead. This makes them suitable to be cut down for Cavalry lances, or to be used as pikes that had more of a spiked end than a spearhead. They can also be used as flag poles
- NSS104 Wire Spears and Javelins. These wire spears are 40mm long, with one end flattened and shaped into a spearhead. The wire is the same gauge as NSS102.

To make a hoplite spear, cut a piece of 1.3mm diameter brass rod to a length of about 40mm long. Place the brass rod on the anvil part of a vice and hammer the end to flatten it out like a spade. Then using side cutters trim the spade to a spear point. Clean up the cut metal at both ends using a file, or a Dremel with a grinding bit.

For a professional result the spear head can be finished by rotating the brass wire against the grinding bit to leave a ring around the spear 5mm from the tip. Blunt the spear slightly so that it will not injure you in the future.

Transfers

Transfers provide a quick and easy way to add complex details to models. Transfers allow detailed heraldic designs and insignia to be made easily. There are three principle types- waterslide transfers, stickers and rub on transfers. Waterslide transfers are the type provided in plastic kits of aircraft and tanks.

Little Big Man Studios make transfers as wonderful full colour paintings miniaturised to stick on shields and flags. These require care to apply correctly, so read the instructions. Remember that LBMS transfers must be applied to a flat white surface. The officers have LBMS transfers.

Waterslide transfers are usually single colour to depict the main design. The following sheets from Veni Vidi Vici (www.3vwargames.co.uk) are relevant for Spartan armies.

- GG5 Spartan red or white,
- GG8 A mix of hoplite designs in black or white.

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Painting Tips

There are many ways to paint 28mm figures. Many people paint the clothing with a dark shade then the main colour and then a highlight colour. For wargaming, where you want to get reasonably good results quickly, it is easier to paint only the main colours and then add shade with a wash of dark transparent stain.

Here is a basic assembly and painting sequence for Spartans

1. Remove mould risers, mismatch, and flash. Mould risers are typically found on hands, elbows, feet and weapons. Sometimes they can be flicked off with a fingernail but usually tweezers or needle nosed pliers are needed. Occasionally they must be filed away with a needle file.
2. Before you start to assemble the figures decide on whether you want to paint the shields on the figure or separately. If the shield is large and close to the body, painting the body is difficult. With Spartans, it is probably easier to add the shields after you have painted the body.
1. Sand the base flat. Easiest way is to place a sheet of coarse sandpaper on a workbench. Hold the figure firmly and vertically in your right hand and push it over the sand paper. Two or three strokes should be enough to give a flat base. The base is flat when the underside is covered in scratches from the sandpaper.
3. I made my own spears from brass rod but you can save time if you use NSS 102 from Gorgon. Assemble the spears on the figures using cyanacrylate adhesive (superglue).
4. Glue the figure to a base. If you are going to use individual bases, this will be the final base. Use cyanacrylate adhesive (superglue) for a permanent bond. If you are going to use multiple bases, use a coin as temporary base so that you can hold the figure for painting. For temporary bases, use PVA glue, as it is easy to remove later.
5. Prime and undercoat the figure. This can be done with brush on enamel paint (e.g. Humbrol Matt Black) or with a spray paint (e.g. GW Chaos Black Spray). For plastic figures spray undercoat usually works well. Metal figures need touching up afterwards as the spray rarely reaches into the recesses. A black undercoat is usually easiest as it also acts as the darkest shade.
6. Paint the helmet, spear butt spike and the shield boss in a bronze colour. For best results do this in two stages. Start with a dark brown colour (e.g. GW Tin Bitz) and then drybrush again with a bright gold colour (e.g. GW Shining Gold). This is done first so that you do not need to be careful.
7. Paint the hands and face with a basic flesh colour (GW Dwarf Flesh is a good base coat for flesh). Highlight with a quick damp brush of a lighter flesh tone (e.g. GW Elf Flesh).
8. Paint the shield liner, spear shaft and scabbard in brown.
9. Drybrush the spear point and sword in a steel colour.
10. Paint the tunic in red or white to preference.
11. Paint the helmet crest in red, white or black.



12. Paint the shield front. This must be white if you are going to use LBMS transfers. For other transfers, paint according to the heraldic design.
13. If you are going to add transfers, you will need to highlight the shield and then apply some varnish. A thin coat of spray varnish is usually easiest. I like to finish the shields to a reasonable level before gluing them to the figure. Glue the shield to the figure before you start the highlight process. Glue on any remaining pikes and spears at the same time. Superglue sticks best with metal to metal contact, so it is a good idea to scrape away paint from the bonding surfaces.
14. Shade the whole figure a dark wash applied with a brush (Army Painter Strong Tone or Vallejo Transparent Smoke 70.939 or GW Devlan Mud Wash). For a more sophisticated result, use different coloured washes in different areas. (GW Devlan Mud on the red. GW Sepia Wash on the flesh and wood. GW Badab Black Wash on the steel.) If you doing a huge amount of figures Army Painter Strong Tone can be used as a dip.
15. Add the shield transfers according to the manufacturer's instructions.
16. Touch up any mistakes and add highlights as desired.
17. Varnish with a spray of gloss varnish to protect the figure. After this has dried overspray with matt varnish.
18. Decorate the base. The easiest way is to paint on PVA glue and dip the base in sand. Once the glue is dry shade the base with a brown wash and highlight with a pale sand colour lightly dry-brushed onto the sand.
19. Add static grass if you want to.



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Further Reading

Websites

www.300spartanwarriors.com

This Greek site is dedicated to the battle of Thermopylae and has extensive sections about the history, the battlefield today and Greek heraldry. The site also includes reviews and commentaries on books and films. The site is run by webmaster, John Trikeriotis, who was very helpful with this project

Books

Osprey Books

Campaign 188 'Thermopylae 480 BC: Last Stand of the 300' by Nic Fields

This book explains the armies and events of Thermopylae.

Warrior 27 'The Greek Hoplite'

This book provides a detailed description of Hoplites and their equipment through the ages.

Elite 66 'The Spartan Army'

This book covers the history of Spartan Armies over many centuries.

Films

'The 300 Spartans' (c) 20th Century Fox 1962

This classic "sword and sandals epic" depicts the Spartans in bronze armor with red crests, red cloaks, golden shields decorated with small black lambdas.

'300' (c) Warner Bros. 2007

This cartoon style interpretation of the story of Thermopylae film is very entertaining although the masked Persian Immortals and war-rhinos are pure fantasy. It shows the Spartans in bronze helmets with no crests, no armor and bronze shields with embossed lambdas.

